



Envision Arlington Standing Committee

Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Time: 7:30 - 9:00 PM

Location: Remote Participation Via Zoom

Members in attendance: Greg Christiana, Scott Lever, Alex Bagnall, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Michael Brownstein, Susan Doctrow, Juli Brazile

Guests: Carl Wagner, Elizabeth Dray, Lenard Diggins

Town administration: Jennifer Raitt

Minutes

1. Introductions

Carl Wagner made public comment about timely East Arlington housing issues.

2. Task Group Updates

Len mentioned that Sustainable Arlington has a new chair.

3. Discuss upcoming Advisory Board Meeting and EA governance

Greg discussed a high-level focus in two areas: the relationship between the Standing Committee and task groups, and between the Standing Committee and the Advisory Committee. Greg suggests that Standing Committee

Juli discussed the past meetings with the Advisory Committee, the history of how they were split off from the rest of the active membership of the Standing Committee due to mismatches in scheduling and priorities. One meeting involved the Network Mapping exercise to help visualize the scope of Envision Arlington and its various efforts.

Scott asked whether the meeting would be an open meeting, and Juli confirmed that

Juli relayed her conversation with Town Counsel about the formal process for transitioning the Standing Committee chair. One possibility, hypothetically, is that Juli could be appointed by the Town Manager to fill that open seat, and a single person would go through the process for becoming chair. Juli explained that early on, Envision Arlington (Vision 2020 at the time) opted task groups into Open Meeting Law for the sake of transparency.

Scott asked about the process for creating / recognizing new task groups. Juli says that recognition of new task groups is a Standing Committee process that does not involve external approval.

Scott posed the question of whether Open Meeting Law applies, or should apply to task group meetings.

Sue pointed out that the task groups get funding from Envision Arlington, so it's reasonable to expect that task groups be open to open/public meetings. She also asked if there were any precedents for task groups wishing to leave Envision Arlington and become private (non-town affiliated) groups.

There was various discussion about the trade-offs for recording, or not recording, Zoom calls for task group meetings. One concern about recording is that it can have a chilling effect on those who wish to share personal experiences with the meeting. (One issue raised related to this was that, as a town group with open meetings, any member of the public, including those who might inhibit expression of some individuals' sharing personal experiences, are free to attend the Zoom session, anyway, and this might have a similarly chilling effect. This raises the question of whether any group with a greater need for privacy might prefer to be a more closed, non town-affiliated group rather than an Envision Arlington task group.). One benefit of recording is that it offers a record for those unable to attend the meetings synchronously.

4. Envision Arlington's potential role with housing

Alex led discussion on housing, with a focus on education around how we got to where we are with housing. He updated the meeting on the housing-focused working group of the Human Rights Commission. He voiced interest in this group analyzing Town Survey results related to housing, and connecting with the Fiscal Resources task group. Juli suggested connecting with Sustainable Arlington with energy efficiency in housing, but Alex pointed out that there's already a lot of focus on policy.

Carl Wagner discussed changes in state law (Enabling Partnership for Growth / Economic Development Bill) and the implications it can have for Arlington, specifically related to density. Carl asks that we consider what will make living in Arlington better for people who already live here, as well as those who wish to live here, but may have found that difficult because of lack of affordability.

Jenny mentioned a Mass Works grant for state infrastructure for addressing traffic and safety issues.

5. Discussion on the Annual Town Survey

Scott gave an update on the Town Survey. The numbers are significantly behind the numbers this time last year. One very likely explanation is a delay in delivery of mailers for the census that advertise the survey.

Sue gave an update on outreach, that she and Kelly planned primarily by modifying Kelly's extensive outreach plan that the town recently used for the census. It includes reaching out directly to individuals who can spread the word among their stakeholders (e.g. principals and school administrators, community entities such as religious groups, FoodLink, etc.), social media, email lists, and flyers around town. She calls for more volunteers to post flyers. The volunteer effort is being organized via spreadsheets that were shared in Googledocs. A press release was already distributed and a second one, now being drafted by Kelly, is scheduled. Elizabeth Dray had previously suggested making the flyers multilingual, and Kelly and Juli worked with Arlington EATS to get a volunteer translators program started, given that the

survey itself is only in English. Elisabeth has the modified flyers (that can be printed as soon as the translations are checked by volunteers fluent in the languages). Based on Arlington EATS information about their target population, Russian, simplified Chinese, and Spanish are the languages, and wording was added to the flyers in these languages suggesting that those needing translation help should call a number that reaches Kelly. Kelly, when she receives these requests, will reach out to the pool of volunteer translators to work one-on-one (via phone) with the resident needing assistance. So far, the flyer wording in Russian and Spanish was okayed, and we are awaiting comments from the individual checking the simplified Chinese. Several volunteers have indicated willingness to be in the pool of volunteers (one for Russian, one for Chinese, and two for Spanish, so far, as well as one for French in case that is needed). Anyone who knows other native-language volunteers to help check with translations should reach out to Kelly, as we don't yet know how much demand there will be.

Jenny asked if we need additional funds for translations. CDBG funds can be used to pay translators. Juli indicated that this could be useful next year, if this pilot with volunteers is successful.

6. Discuss Candidate's Night Support

Alex and Len updated the meeting on Candidate's Night. They are planning to use the Town's Zoom account. There will be 21 breakout rooms, one per precinct, on March 24, and the town-wide Candidate's Night scheduled for March 31. Elisabeth, who has been coordinating with the League of Women Voters, noted that questions will be obtained from the public prior to March 31 and it was suggested that questions might be generated during the March 24 breakout meetings.

7. Budget update

Elisabeth reported two expenditures related to the Survey, and anticipates a small amount of additional spending for flyers.

8. New Business

Michael has not heard back yet about the Police Civilian Advisory Study Group. Juli suggested contacting John Hurd.

Meeting adjourned at 9:13pm.